

CHAPTER 4

Public Engagement

Community Engagement Overview

Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (MGRP) is a unique part of the Minneapolis landscape with an identity that has been shaped by the river and the communities that have lived alongside it. The park is used by thousands of people either traveling through for work or school or stopping by one of its many gathering spaces for social and recreational activities. MGRP is surrounded by major landowners like the University of Minnesota; within many diverse neighborhoods; has significance to many cultural community groups; and is cared for by various advocacy groups and agencies.

A successful master plan for the park is dependent on broad and meaningful participation from community members and park users. Over the course of the master planning process, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the MGRP project team met with hundreds of community members by hosting listening sessions, participating in festivals, tabling at farmers

markets and other special events, organizing open house events, and administering online surveys.

The MGRP project team and MPRB worked alongside the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to encompass a broad perspective of ideas, input and expertise.





CAC members meet at the MPRB Headquarters for an interactive mapping workshop



CAC members share ideas about potential recreational activities along the Gorge



CAC members write ideas on large maps of the project area and discuss



Small groups work together in brainstorming ideas

Community Advisory Committee

The 21-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was convened in an effort to capture the broad community input. The committee is comprised of community members appointed by MPRB Commissioners, City Council members, representatives from the University of Minnesota and neighborhood associations/councils, and MPRB Planning staff.

Table 4-1. Community Advisory Committee

Name	Appointer
Shawn Sheely	Brad Bourn, MPRB District 6 Commissioner and President
Dan Cross	Chris Meyer, MPRB District 1 Commissioner
Nick Rebel	Chris Meyer, MPRB District 1 Commissioner
Ukasha Dakane	AK Hassan, MPRB District 3 Commissioner
Hinda Abdi	AK Hassan, MPRB District 3 Commissioner
Irene Jones	Steffanie Musich, MPRB District 5 Commissioner
Arielle Courtney	Steffanie Musich, MPRB District 5 Commissioner
Elizabeth Hinz	Meg Forney, MPRB At-Large Commissioner
Edric Lysne	Latrisha Vetaw, MPRB At-Large Commissioner
Bill Shroyer	Londel French, MPRB At-Large Commissioner
Gabriel Konar-Steenberg	Cam Gordon, City Council Member, Ward 2
Linnea Wier	Abdi Warsame, City Council Member, Ward 6
Kevin McDonald	Andrew Johnson, City Council Member, Ward 12
Levi O'Tool	University of Minnesota
Zev Radziwill	Cedar-Riverside Neighborhood
Alexis Troshinetz	Seward Neighborhood Group
Emily Green	Longfellow Community Council
Tom Kilton	University/Prospect Park neighborhoods
Wang Ping	MPRB Planning staff appointment
David Wiggins	MPRB Planning staff appointment
Matt Moore	MPRB Planning staff appointment

The CAC met a total of eight times over the course of the master planning process and discussed an array of topics and ideas through presentations, workshops, and small group discussions. The CAC meetings were facilitated by MPRB staff and the MGRP project team. CAC meetings were generally well attended with at least half and in most cases more than three-quarters of the members attending the meetings. Members of the general public were present at each CAC meeting, and each meeting allowed for public comments. CAC meeting discussions and activities are listed on the following page.

CAC Meeting Summaries

CAC 1 – April 2018

- » Introduction to the project
- » Virtual tour of the project area
- » Discussion of Phase I (rehabilitation) focus areas: Bohemian Flats and Annie Young Meadow

CAC 2 – May 2018

- » Discussion of the community engagement plan
- » Presentation of community input update: Special events, Survey #1
- » Further discussion on the Phase I (rehabilitation) focus area projects

CAC 3 – June 2018

- » Guest presentations by Dave Smith (Author of City of Parks) and John Anfinson (NPS)
- » Introduction to master planning
- » Presentation of the existing conditions assessment results
- » Presentation of park user demographics assessment results
- » Presentation of community input update: Special events
- » Visioning activity; discussion about the overall vision for the Gorge

CAC 4 – July 2018

- » Workshop on the guiding principles and vision statement
- » Visioning activity to create the vision statement and values

CAC 5 – August 2018

- » Review and finalize the guiding principles and vision statement
- » Review of the framework designs

CAC 6 – September 2018

- » Special public comment opportunity
- » Presentation of community input update: Listening sessions, Survey #2
- » Review and finalize the framework designs
- » Introduction to the interpretive framework designs

CAC 7 – November 2018

- » Staff report on community engagement
- » Design guidelines discussion
- » Trails assessment and opportunities discussion
- » Framework planning discussion

CAC 8 – December 2018

- » Staff report on community engagement
- » Trails discussion
- » Framework planning and prioritization
- » High level corridor recommendations

Notes from the CAC Meetings were posted on the MPRB project website and are available in the Appendix.



Listening Sessions

Meeting people in the community is the most effective and meaningful way to reach underrepresented voices. The primary method for connecting with community members and allowing stories to be shared was through listening sessions. Each listening session included an overview of the project that was facilitated by MPRB staff and MGRP project team. Large poster boards of the project area were brought to the listening sessions to allow community members to place their notes and ideas on sticky notes and adhere them to the large maps of the project area. Discussion questions were used to facilitate the conversation. This time was also used to listen to the concerns, stories, ideas, and needs of the community members.

A note taker was present at the listening sessions to ensure information was recorded and organized appropriately. The listening sessions were focused around meeting with community groups, cultural groups, and other key stakeholders in spaces close to them, and at times of the week most convenient for them. The input from the listening sessions gave specific insights to the cultural ideas and basic needs of the communities living near the Gorge. The participant groups and listening session locations are listed below:

- » **American Indian Community at the Minnesota Chippewa Tribal Office**
- » **K-5 Somali students at Brian Coyle Center**
- » **Somali American Community at the Brian Coyle Center**
- » **American Indian Community at the Minneapolis American Indian Center**
- » **Riverside Community members at the Riverside Davanni's Pizza**
- » **University of Minnesota Students at the University of Minnesota Coffman Memorial Union**

Notes from the Listening Sessions are available in the Appendix.



Earth Day Clean Up (courtesy of MPRB)

Special Events

Celebrating at community events was a meaningful and interactive way to receive community input. People were eager to talk about the park and provide the project team with their ideas and concerns. This was also an opportunity to inform and educate community members about the master planning process and ultimately reach more people. The following is a list of special events the project team attended:

- » **Earth Day Clean Up (May 12, 2018)**
- » **Prospect Park ice cream social (June 1, 2018)**
- » **Boat Tour of Mississippi Gorge Regional Park (June 16, 2018)**
- » **Longfellow Community Council “Share the Gorge” (July 25, 2018)**
- » **Owamni Festival (July 28, 2018)**
- » **Open Streets Festival (July 22 & 26, 2018)**
- » **Luxton Park Summer Celebration (August 14, 2018)**
- » **Four Sisters Farmers Market (July-August 2018)**

Documentation from the Special Events are available in the Appendix.

Open House Events

Open House events were hosted by MPRB and the project team to bring information to the public in an interactive way. Open house events were attended primarily by community members who were not present at listening session or other community outreach events. These events gave community members an opportunity to talk one-on-one with MPRB staff and the project team. The information presented at the Open house events were a collaboration of the information presented to the CAC and PAC. The events were organized in a way that allowed people to walk in, start anywhere, ask questions, and leave ideas or comments. The following is a list of the Open House events held:

- **May 9, 2018 Matthews Recreation Center.** This Open House event showcased existing conditions and precedent images of Bohemian Flats and Annie Young Meadow. Survey #1 was also available in a paper format. The goal of this event was to gather ideas for the Phase I rehabilitation projects.
- **July 18, 2018 at Swedish American Center.** This Open House event showed the initial design concepts. The goal of the event was to gather feedback for each focus area.
- **November 30, 2018 at various locations (MPRB Headquarters, University of Minnesota, Rapson Hall, Brian Coyle Center, Longfellow Recreation Center).** These Open House events provided community members the opportunity to see the final concepts and plans. The goal of these events was to gather feedback from a variety of communities as the draft plan moved forward.

Feedback from the Open House events are available in the Appendix.



Community members gather at Matthews Recreation Center in South Minneapolis



Project staff answers questions from community members



Project team member welcoming community members at an open house event



Community members reviewing project boards

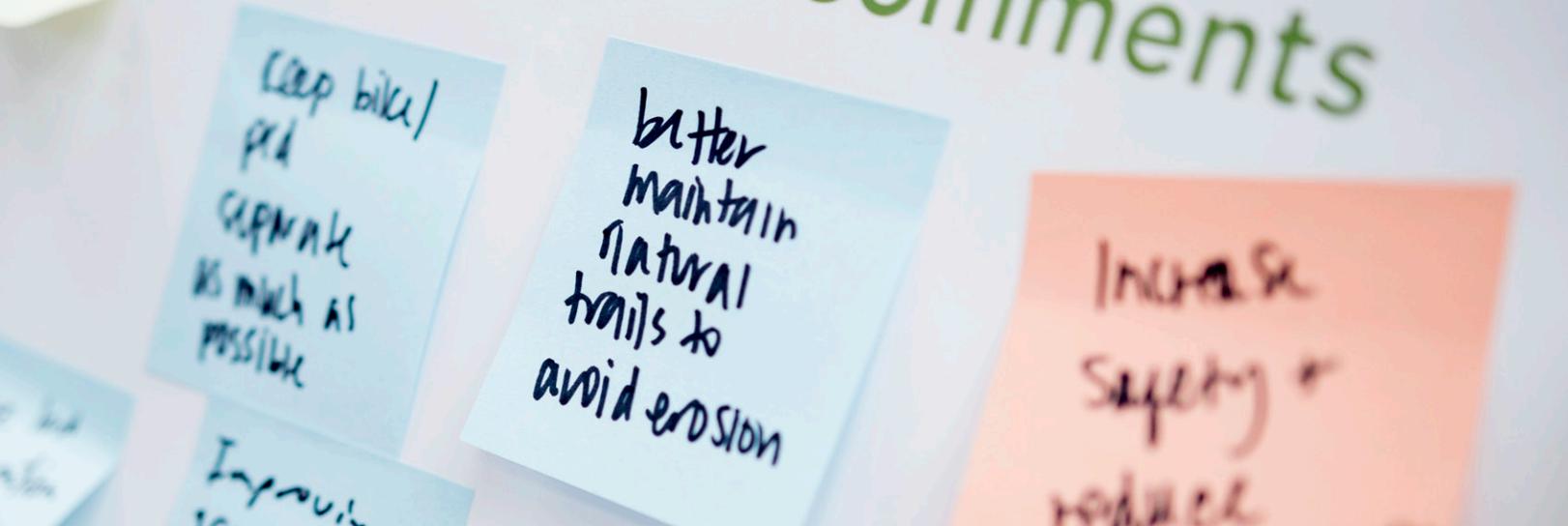


A project team member and a community member discuss the project



Community members at the Swedish American Center discuss project details

Additional Comments

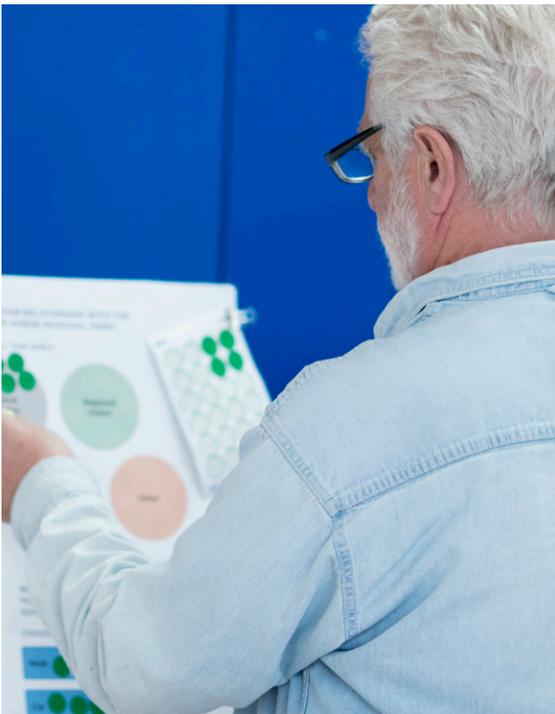


Online Surveys

Surveys were another method of collecting input from the community. Surveys were linked to the MPRB project webpage and asked a variety of questions relating to the project and park visitor vision and recreational goals. Two surveys were conducted that focused on different aspects of the planning process to invite public feedback.

- » **Survey #1 topic:** General demographic of park users/uses, what people want to see improved, what people want to see added to the park = 1,084 responses
- » **Survey #2 topic:** Design Concepts = 282 responses

Surveys were posted on the MPRB project website and survey questions / results are available in the Appendix.



Online Survey #1 was printed on boards for community members at the open house events to provide feedback

Project Advisory Committee

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was made up of MPRB staff from Planning, Asset Management, Environmental Management, Park Police, Forestry, Communication, and Recreation. Each member of the PAC offered input from their area of expertise. PAC members offered a unique perspective on the day-to-day operations of parks, safety and police, and recreation and maintenance in the Gorge. Below is a list of discussion topics at each PAC meeting.

PAC 1 – March 2018

- » Introduction to the project
- » Virtual tour of the project area
- » Discussion of the Phase I (rehabilitation) focus areas: Bohemian Flats and Annie Young Meadow

PAC 2 – April 2018

- » Discussion of recreation trends
- » Further discussion of the Phase I projects and Phase II next steps

PAC 3 – May 2018

- » Review of inventory and analysis reports

PAC 4 – June 2018

- » Final discussion of the rehabilitation projects

PAC 5 – July 2018

- » Review of vision statement and guiding principles drafted in the CAC meeting

PAC 6 – August 2018

- » Review and discussion of framework designs

PAC 7 – December 2018

- » Review and discussion of framework planning and trail design

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was made up of representatives from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, American Rivers, the State of Minnesota (Department of Natural Resources, State Historic Preservation Office, and Minnesota Historical Society), Metropolitan Council, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, City of St. Paul, the National Park Service, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and community partners and subject matter experts. The TAC met twice and provided subject matter expertise on the discussions and decisions made by the CAC and PAC.

TAC 1 – May 2018

- » Introduction of the project and overview of the master planning process
- » Discussion of Phase I (rehabilitation) focus areas: Bohemian Flats and Annie Young Meadow

TAC 2 – October 2018

- » Presentation of updates for various aspects of the project
- » Review and discussion of framework designs
- » Framework design activity

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